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## RECENT TENDENCIES IN THE STUDY OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

ONE hundred and sixteen years have elapsed since the French National Assembly issued a remarkable manifesto in which it discussed the nature, extent, and general beneficence of the Revolution. After only six or seven months of work the Assembly ventured to claim that under its auspices "an old and corrupt nation had been born again into liberty"; the rights of man, misconceived and insulted for centuries, had been re-established for all mankind; privileges without number which had formed the public law of France had been abolished for ever. "Is there a single citizen worthy of the name", it exclaims, "who dares to look back, who would once more rebuild the ruins which surround us in order to contemplate again the former structure?"

Yet not a few have dared to look back with regret, even with yearning, upon that Ancien Régime whose ruins the Assembly so plentifully sowed with the salt of its contempt. Indeed a writer of our own day, M. Charles d'Héricault, solemnized the hundredth anniversary of the meeting of the Estates General by rebuilding the ancient edifice with idyllic grace and peopling it with a happy and virtuous throng who had lived together in blessed concord until they suffered themselves to be alienated from God and their king by the satanic obsession of the Revolution. According to M. d'Héricault, the Ancien Régime had served to develop "in the highest degree in each social class those particular qualities required in order that all might work together toward the organization of a perfect society. There was, first of all, the priest, wise, venerable, devoted; then the former despot, now transformed into a courtly and respected king; and the soldier, now a polished nobleman, the soul of honor. The bourgeoisie were rich, dignified, and well educated; lastly the people, pious and gentle, consoled themselves for the lesser troubles of life by amassing wealth, by singing and dancing, while they met their graver misfortunes by the thought of heaven."

But all at once with stupifying suddenness and inhuman violence this happy, Christian, and monarchical France began cursing both priests and kings; she bowed down before a new goddess with all the devotion which she had formerly lavished upon her old guides

whom she would now exterminate—"Cette idole nouvelle, c'est ce qu'on nomma fort justement la Révolution."<sup>1</sup>

It might at first sight seem hardly necessary to reckon seriously with the opinions of a hopelessly reactionary royalist who received his earliest impressions under Charles X. But M. d'Héricault is only one of a group of really important and scholarly writers who in the interests of reaction have devoted themselves to picturing the horrors and anarchy of the Reign of Terror. Moreover, the existence of this class of historians can alone explain the attitude of the exalted Republicans, who by no means consent to pass over the utterances of their inveterate enemies in silent contempt.<sup>2</sup>

When the present municipal government of Paris subsidizes historical investigation, it is influenced by something more than scientific interest or even ordinary civic pride. The acts of the Commune during the Revolution are being collected and published with a view of establishing "the immortal glory of Paris" in forwarding "the emancipation of humanity". They show how the representatives of Paris founded a new order based on liberty and equality, "opposing virtue alone, patriotism, and self-abnegation to the treason, perfidy, and calumny which the selfishness of the aristocrats never ceased to foment against those noble citizens of whom

<sup>1</sup> *La France Révolutionnaire, 1789-1889* (Paris, 1889), p. i. M. d'Héricault's eulogy of the Ancien Régime first appeared in the opening issue of the *Revue de la Révolution* (1883), a valuable but highly reactionary periodical which he edited. Since it is impossible to reproduce in English the exalted impression made by M. d'Héricault's own mother-tongue, I add a short passage in the original:

"La France est une nation naturellement guerrière et sensible, formée par des évêques, élevée par des rois.

"Les évêques, en entretenant, par une infatigable prédication, la force morale dans son âme gracieuse, firent des Français un peuple enthousiaste. Les rois, en satisfaisant ses instincts guerriers par une activité tournée presque continuellement vers un grand but, qui était l'unité de la patrie, en firent un peuple docile.

"Quand, après douze siècles de cette éducation pieuse et de cette tutelle monarchique, la France, continuant une enfance pleine de foi et une jeunesse glorieuse, entra dans la maturité, elle présenta un modèle de civilisation qui parut achevé. L'Europe, avec une envie bientôt subjuguée, y vint admirer l'humanité dans sa grâce noble et artistique, dans tout le développement de la force intellectuelle, soit littéraire, soit philosophique.

"Pour l'observateur, cette civilisation de la France virile, de la France du dix-septième siècle, possédait surtout un don excellent: elle avait développé, dans chaque classe sociale, la plus haute des qualités qui sont requises en chacune de ces classes pour travailler à organiser une société parfaite."

<sup>2</sup> Even those who are not royalists or even reactionary may be charged with loving too well the old order of things. According to M. Aulard, M. Funck-Brentano "est accusé de se montrer partial pour l'ancien régime, partial avec attendrissement". This fearful suspicion has given rise to some bitterness between the two scholars. See *La Révolution Française*, XLIV. 376 (1903). The trouble arose in connection with the sentiments expressed by Funck-Brentano in his recent studies, *L'Affaire du Collier*—an episode to which he attributes great importance—and the sequel to the affair, *La Mort de la Reine*.

they might make martyrs but never renegades".<sup>1</sup> When one calmly considers the rôle of the Paris Commune in the establishing of the first French republic, such sentiments appear quite as absurdly apologetic as M. d'Héricault's picture of the felicity of the Ancien Régime.

In short, Frenchmen still love or hate the Revolution as did their forefathers in 1790. A writer has very recently declared that "the idea of treating the Revolution as an event analogous to other events, without either curses or apologies, has as yet never occurred to any one."<sup>2</sup> This is certainly unfair, but it is far nearer the truth than Aulard's claim that he and his band treat the history of the Revolution in the same spirit in which they might deal with that of Greece or Rome. It will be a long time before Frenchmen will speak of Danton, Anacharsis Cloots, Lafayette, and Desmoulins in the same disengaged spirit in which they might of Cleon, Brasidas, Nicias, and Aristophanes.

The first tendency, then, which may be noted in the study of the Revolution is that toward partizan enthusiasm<sup>3</sup> which is still perpetuated in many important works and must still be reckoned with as it had to be reckoned with a hundred years ago. In this respect the Revolution bears out the observation of Tocqueville that, although political in its nature, it proceeded in the manner of a religious revolution, for it stirred up animosities which in their inveterate bitterness rank with the hateful emotions that have accompanied religious changes. The explanation of this perpetual partizanship is to be sought partly in the French temperament, but chiefly in the fact that the Revolution did not succeed in settling some of the most important questions that it raised, notably the nature of the central government and the relations between Church and State. Then the successive constitutional revolutions, although by no means so fundamental as commonly supposed, have served to raise the spirits of each party in turn and so to perpetuate hopes in the breasts of the most radical as well as the most conservative. Consequently the first Revolution forms the background of every debate upon current issues, and the "principles of 1789" are ap-

<sup>1</sup> *Actes de la Commune de Paris*, edited for the city by Lacroix, I. p. i (1894).

<sup>2</sup> T. Cerfberr, *Essai sur le Mouvement Social et Intellectuel en France depuis 1789* (Paris, 1902), 113. Aulard sadly comments on Cerfberr's harsh judgment: "C'est étrangement méconnaître tout ce que mes amis et moi, depuis bientôt vingt ans, avons écrit et professé, sans éclat et sans talent, je le veux bien, mais en proclamant très haut et en poursuivant sans relâche le dessein d'étudier l'histoire de la Révolution 'sans anathème comme sans apologie'". *La Révolution Française*, XLII. 475.

<sup>3</sup> I recollect a discussion some fifteen years ago in the Paris newspapers of a question raised in the Chambre des Députés as to whether it was necessary to defend or abhor the Revolution *en bloc*.

pealed to with interpretations varying with the taste, purposes, and convictions of each particular orator who evokes them.

One may, however, permit his politics to be influenced by a more or less fantastic conception of the genius of the Revolution, and yet do much to promote sound historical learning.<sup>1</sup> Even the un-fairest and most sentimental writer may be moved by the modern passion for "documentation", and supply his readers with neglected archival material. There is a general agreement among both the friends and the foes of the Revolution as to the rules of the game. They are at one in the conviction that the basis of historical research must be constantly broadened by the publication of documentary matter of all kinds; consequently the work of rendering new sources of knowledge available by printing, and by classifying and cataloguing the unprinted material, is now proceeding with bewildering rapidity. This is seen in the ever-increasing mass of documents, documented monographs, local histories, historical periodicals, proceedings, reports, and bulletins of historical associations which are pouring from the presses of Paris and the provinces in a stream of ever-increasing width and depth.

Efforts to make the sources readily available began with the meeting of the Estates General. The proceedings of the assembly, reports of its committees, and the debates and speeches were published contemporaneously in a more or less imperfect form.<sup>2</sup> The *Moniteur*, the newspaper of the period most nearly resembling a modern journal, was early reprinted with an excellent documentary introduction dealing with the circumstances of the assembling of the Estates General. There were, of course, innumerable pamphlets, newspapers, and memoirs. A collection of the latter began to appear in 1820 under the editorship of Berville and Barrière (1820-1827, in fifty-five volumes). Still very valuable for the isolated and impecunious student is the motley collection of Buchez and Roux, *Histoire Parlementaire de la Révolution*, published in forty handy volumes, 1834-1838, and readily procurable through the Paris bouquinistes. The *Archives Parlementaires*, undertaken under Napoleon III. and purporting to contain a complete collection of the debates in the successive French legislative bodies, has failed to reach a high standard of excellence. Of the first series (1789-1800) some sixty-six volumes have appeared, coming down to the middle of the year 1793. It is carelessly edited, and the whole work is

<sup>1</sup> Monin says in his notice of Chassin's career: "Il semble qu'il ne demandait à l'histoire idéalisée de la Révolution que de nouvelles forces pour la lutte quotidienne." *La Révolution Française*, XLI. 100 (1901).

<sup>2</sup> A particularly large collection of these is in the possession of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania at Philadelphia.

condemned, with perhaps undue harshness, by Aulard and others as "fantaisiste". It is probable that the immense task will have to be done all over again.<sup>1</sup>

As is well known, Guizot when minister of public education created a commission to take charge of the investigation and publication of unpublished material relating to the history of France. Since its original appointment in 1834 this commission, which has undergone a number of metamorphoses and is now called the Comité des Travaux Historiques et Scientifiques, has been issuing the great *Collection de Documents Inédits*. Until 1886 it confined its activity to the period before the Revolution, but in that year a special subcommission was created to attend to material having to do with the Revolution, so that during the past twenty years the French national government has been promoting the printing of important sources for the period under consideration.<sup>2</sup> As examples of this material may be mentioned the acts of the Committee of Public Safety, edited by Aulard, of which sixteen volumes have appeared; Brette's material relating to the convocation of the Estates General (volumes I.-III.); the correspondence of Mercy-Argenteau, of Madame Roland, and of Carnot; Flammermont's remarkable collection of the protests of the *Parlement* of Paris during the eighteenth century; and the proceedings of the several committees on public instruction of the Constituante and the Convention.

In December, 1886, shortly before the anniversary of the first appearance of the Paris Commune upon the stage of history, the Municipal Council of Paris established a committee to effect "the orderly publication of scattered or unpublished original documents which would serve to make clear the rôle of the Commune of Paris in the great revolutionary movement which during the years 1789-1800 laid the foundations, so to speak, for the emancipation of humanity".<sup>3</sup> The municipality has accordingly been publishing since 1888 the *Collection de Documents relatifs à l'Histoire de Paris pendant la Révolution Française*. About forty stout volumes have already appeared, and new projects are announced from time to time. The series embraces the acts of the Commune, part I., in seven volumes, edited by Lacroix (part II. in preparation, three volumes already issued, 1900-1905); the proceedings of the Jacobin Club, edited by the indefatigable M. Aulard, who is most prominent among the con-

<sup>1</sup> See articles in the *Revue Historique*, LXXXI. 433-436 (1903), and *La Révolution Française*, XVI. 5-29, 193-208 (1889).

<sup>2</sup> See Langlois, *Manuel de Bibliographie Historique*, part II. 357 et seqq. For a list of the volumes published by the commission see the *Bibliographie* which it issued in 1898 and the lists which now and then accompany current issues.

<sup>3</sup> Jules Cousin in the session of January 31, 1887, *Actes de la Commune de Paris*, I. i.

tributors; Chassin's and Charavay's collections relating to the Paris elections in 1789, the Paris cahiers, and the later history of the electoral assembly; Monin's *L'État de Paris en 1789*; and Aulard's seven volumes on Paris during the reaction of Thermidor, the Directory, and the Consulate. Dr. Robinet has given us two volumes on the religious movement. Two vast classified bibliographies are in course of publication, that of Tourneux for the printed sources and of Tuetey for the manuscript material.

But these large sets published under government auspices in no way exhaust the output of unpublished material. The *fureur de l'inédit*, of which Brunetière has spoken, becomes more furious daily. The most audacious projects are formulated for almost hopelessly increasing the mass of data at our disposal. The *Révolution Française*, a periodical now in its fiftieth volume and edited by M. Aulard, devotes its whole attention to the progress of the study of the Revolutionary period and publishes many documents. It is now reinforced by the new *Revue d'Histoire Moderne et Contemporaine*, edited by Caron and Sagnac, which naturally enters the same field rather more frequently than a more general review like the *Revue Historique* or the *Revue des Questions Historiques*.<sup>1</sup> Writers of monographs weigh down their volumes with an ever-increasing number of *pièces justificatives*, which not infrequently form the chief value of the work.

Then there are the local historical associations with which, as Langlois says, France is "saturated."<sup>2</sup> Upward of three hundred are busy printing reports, proceedings, bulletins, or regular periodicals. No single library can flatter itself that it contains complete collections of these local publications, although much valuable material and useful discussion is buried in them, not a little of which has a bearing on the Revolution.

In spite, however, of the bewildering amount of authentic data already at hand, it is generally conceded that there is far too little to enable historians of the period to settle some of the most funda-

<sup>1</sup> The *Revue de la Révolution*, edited by d'Héricault and Bord, which began to appear in 1883, was discontinued after 1887. It was a continued and violent attack on the Revolution, as might be expected if we remember that M. d'Héricault declared all republicans "voués par leur essence même à l'iniquité et à la bêtise". Nevertheless the publication contained many valuable articles, documents, and illustrations.

<sup>2</sup> M. R. de Lasteyrie's *Bibliographie Générale des Travaux Historiques et Archéologiques Publiés par les Sociétés Savantes de la France* (1888-1905, 4 vols.) is a minute, painstaking catalogue of their publications, giving the title and contents of each volume, prefaced by a historical note on the organization, etc., of each society. A supplement 1885-1900 is projected, and the first two instalments of an annual continuation, 1901-1902 and 1902-1903 (1904, 1905), have appeared.

mental questions. Two years ago Jaurès, the distinguished leader of the more broad-minded among the French socialists, urged in the Chamber of Deputies that a commission should be appointed to effect, under government auspices, a classification and publication of the documents in the national and local archives relating to the economic phases of the Revolution. He quite properly urged that this field was more important than the political, to which so much attention had been given. Following his recommendation, the minister of public instruction appointed such a commission December 21, 1903, to take a place beside that originally established by Guizot. Its members include many of the foremost French historians—Jaurès, chairman, Aulard, Brette, Bloch, Caron, Esmein, Gide, Glasson, Lavissee, Levasseur, Sagnac, Sée, Seignobos, and others.

The ministerial instructions relating to the commission's activity, issued April 19, 1904,<sup>1</sup> restrict their field to the period 1789–1800, although such attention may be given to the Ancien Régime as is necessary to an understanding of the situation of France upon the meeting of the Estates General. The chief topics for which material is to be published are the following: the economic conditions in France in 1789, especially as revealed in the cahiers of the parishes and various corporations; the guilds and their abolition; the feudal dues, their persistence and gradual extinction; an inventory of the church possessions and those of the émigrés, their sale, and the history of the assignats; changes in agriculture, industries, domestic and foreign commerce, payment of taxes, the question of supplies and of the maximum, shifting of population, rates of wages, mortgages, effects of laws relating to inheritance, etc.—a comprehensive programme indeed.

The commission has decided to publish the proceedings of the Constituent Assembly's committee on industry and agriculture, to occupy perhaps three volumes, and has designated MM. Caron and Sagnac to edit a collection of documents relating to the abolition of the seigniorial system, 1789–1793.<sup>2</sup> But these are mere trifles in comparison with two far more ambitious and important undertakings which the commission now has under way.<sup>3</sup>

The first of these is the systematic publication of the cahiers of 1789, that is to say, the lists of grievances and suggestions for reform prepared by every parish and town in France upon the occa-

<sup>1</sup> Reprinted in *La Révolution Française*, XLVI. 451–459.

<sup>2</sup> This is in press. Sagnac gives an account of the undertaking *ibid.*, December, 1905 (XLIX. 481–500).

<sup>3</sup> For an account of the commission's work see *ibid.*, January, April, and December issues, 1905 (XLVIII. 66–70, 353–363; XLIX. 537–547, 561–563). There the reader will find the method of co-operation between the various departmental committees described.



sion of the summoning of the Estates General. The importance of this unique historical material has been estimated variously.<sup>1</sup> It seems preposterous, however, making every allowance for the influence of model cahiers slavishly copied, to refuse to assign to this unique document in the history of nations a most exalted place in the hierarchy of sources. It is, as Tocqueville has well said, the last will and testament of the Ancien Régime; and no more worthy or far-reaching service could be rendered by the new commission than the preparation of a scholarly and complete edition of the local cahiers. The *Archives Parlementaires*, referred to above, devoted its first six or seven volumes to the cahiers of the electoral districts—the so-called *bailliages* and *sénéchaussées*. The work was, however, badly done, and a number of private and quite unofficial cahiers were included. On the other hand, almost all the original local cahiers of the parishes and of the various urban corporations—which were later edited and condensed into the more general cahier of each electoral district—were omitted altogether by the editors of the *Archives*.<sup>2</sup> Had all these been included, they would, according to the estimate of M. Brette, have filled no less than one hundred volumes of the *Archives*, which are quarto and printed in double columns. This will serve to give an idea of the magnitude of the task undertaken by M. Jaurès's commission.

A considerable number of the local cahiers have been issued from time to time by individuals and by local historical societies, but the commission proposes to make their collection complete and include all those already published in the *Archives Parlementaires* or elsewhere. The work has been carefully divided among departmental committees, and several of these are nearly ready to issue the cahiers of their several districts. Years will probably elapse, however, before the whole series is completed.<sup>3</sup>

The second great undertaking of the commission is the collection and publication of the data relating to the very fundamental but vexed question of the extent and disposal of the *biens nationaux*, that is to say, the property of the clergy, monks, ecclesiastical organizations, and émigrés, as well as that included in the king's domain, all of which was taken over by the state early in the Revolution. It is clear that the economic and social effects of the confiscation and

<sup>1</sup> See article and references by Onou, "La Valeur des Cahiers de 1789", *La Révolution Française*, November, 1905 (XLIX. 385-417).

<sup>2</sup> Brette, "Les Cahiers de 1789 et les 'Archives Parlementaires'", *ibid.*, July, 1904 (XLVII. 5-27).

<sup>3</sup> An excellent brief study of the main contentions of the cahiers is that of Edme Champion, *La France d'après les Cahiers de 1789* (1897). Here, pp. 7-8, and in the *Cambridge Modern History*, VIII. 802 *et seqq.*, one may find partial lists of the collections of local cahiers which have been issued.

hasty disposal of so considerable a part of the landed possessions of France must have been momentous. This agrarian revolution is still frequently referred to in the current debates, but the discussion is based upon very insufficient material, and there continues to be much uncertainty as to whether the peasant or the bourgeoisie gained more by the redistribution, and as to what effect this exercised upon the increase of small holdings.<sup>1</sup>

The inventories of the various confiscated holdings, which the commission proposes to publish, will furnish for the first time an adequate basis for estimating the extent and value of the ecclesiastical property at the end of the Ancien Régime, about which there has been so much speculation. The circumstances of the sale of the property by the government will serve to determine the exact destination of the lands.<sup>2</sup>

It is clear that the classes of sources to which the commission will give preference are those of official authenticity. Indeed the tendency to relegate the formerly highly esteemed personal *mémoires* to a subordinate place among the sources is a marked scientific achievement of recent years. Official registers, *procès-verbaux*, reports of committees, letters, diaries, all must take precedence in the matter of accuracy to personal reminiscences, usually written long after the events to which they refer.<sup>3</sup>

The conception of history underlying the vast project of M. Jaurès and his colleagues naturally suggests a consideration of the tendencies which may be distinguished in the treatment of material already at hand. As Carlyle said long ago, the words "French Revolution" may "have as many meanings as there are speakers of them". To him it meant "the open, violent rebellion and victory of disimprisoned anarchy against corrupt, worn-out authority; how anarchy breaks prison, bursts up from the infinite deep, and rages uncontrollable, immeasurable, enveloping a world; in phasis after phasis of fever-frenzy".<sup>4</sup> By Taine the Revolution is likened to the disorders produced in a gentleman "rather weak in constitution but apparently sound and of peaceful habits who drinks eagerly of a new liquor, falls suddenly to the ground, foaming at the mouth,

<sup>1</sup> Ivan Loutchisky began the scientific study of this matter in his *La Petite Propriété en France avant la Révolution et la Vente des Biens Nationaux* (Paris, 1897).

<sup>2</sup> The directions issued by the commission to the local committees in regard to the method of collecting and arranging the material may be found in *La Révolution Française*, December, 1905 (XLIX. 537-547).

<sup>3</sup> Taine's reckless use of worthless sources has been illustrated recently by Belloc, "Ten Pages of Taine", *The International Quarterly*, XII. 255-272 (January, 1906).

<sup>4</sup> *French Revolution*, sections 456-457 (book VI., ch. 1).

delirious and convulsed".<sup>1</sup> Neither Carlyle nor Taine took his imagery so seriously as to miss some of the deeper significance of the Revolution; but weaker heads than theirs have been completely bewildered by the loud talk and disorder of the period, which they have mistaken for the Revolution itself. One of the most striking achievements of the last quarter of a century is the relegation of the Reign of Terror to its proper place. The English-reading public have Professor Morse Stephens in especial to thank for explaining and reducing to its proper proportions the disimprisoned anarchy, which indeed seems almost trivial when compared with the magnificent turmoil in Russia at the present moment.

The merely personal has always been conspicuous in the histories of the Revolution. Marie Antoinette, the Princess de Lamballe, Marat, Charlotte Corday, Desmoulins, Danton, Saint-Just, the poor little dauphin—these have been dear to the hearts of readers whose interest was much more readily enlisted in the storming of the Bastille than in the establishment of the present departments of France or the origin of the Civil Constitution of the Clergy. The picturesque, the gruesome, the anecdotal, are all falling into the background and giving place to the fundamental and permanent results of the general movement.

These fundamental changes belong, however, to the most varied classes. The political have naturally received early and constant attention. Much prominence has been given to the formation and dissolution of the successive parties in the successive governmental bodies and to the complexion of the political clubs and the rôle of the journalists. These have perhaps formed the core of the more serious general accounts of the Revolution, and M. Aulard has just given us a new and excellent review of the period from a political standpoint.<sup>2</sup> Yet much of the political agitation was very superficial; and, unless taken in connection with the deeper special issues, it is bound to attract less and less attention as the actors in the drama lose their personal interest for us.

Somewhat akin to the political aspects of the Revolution are the diplomatic, for which many historians, recently most conspicuously M. Sorel, have exhibited a marked penchant. There is no reason why the main outlines of negotiations during the long wars which began in April, 1792, should not be pretty clear by this time, since they have long been receiving careful attention from German and Austrian scholars as well as French. Sorel's extraordinary work upon Europe and the French Revolution,<sup>3</sup> which has just been

<sup>1</sup> *Ancien Régime*, liv. III., ch. 1.

<sup>2</sup> *Histoire Politique de la Révolution Française, 1789-1804* (1901).

<sup>3</sup> *L'Europe et la Révolution Française*, eight vols. (coming down to 1815), 1885-1904.

brought to completion, is characterized by scholarship and literary finish. It combines most happily the internal history of France with a discussion of the broader influences of the revolutionary movement throughout Europe, and should completely replace Sybel's ill-balanced and partizan work, which unfortunately enjoys a reputation which it ill deserves.

I will say nothing about the progress in military history. The whole matter of the Revolutionary wars is being once more reviewed by M. Chuquet,<sup>1</sup> who seems to be the Jomini of our day. Fighting has a perennial fascination for many minds, and no one questions its importance when properly treated, but military history easily degenerates into as episodal and personal a chronicle as the old-fashioned annals of the king's court.

Of the really living issues bequeathed by the Revolution to France of to-day, three are easily distinguishable by reason of the never-ending discussion to which they give rise: first, the question of the relations between the civil and ecclesiastical organizations; second, and closely allied with the first, the problem of education and of the monastic orders; and lastly, the economic troubles, which are not of course peculiar to France, but which are there always considered in relation with the vital changes introduced by the legislation of the Revolution.

Among these changes none was more momentous than the reform of that ancient ecclesiastical organization which had continued to perpetuate many medieval traits flagrantly out of accord with the spirit and conditions of the eighteenth century. The exact nature and effects of the reforms in the Church have however been obscured both by our ignorance of the exact condition of the clergy and the institutions and property which they controlled before 1790, and by the violent religious prejudices which have dominated many writers. The extreme clerical party, on the one hand, has always been prone to mistake an objection to an impropriated tithe for a rejection of Christianity; and, on the other hand, the anticlericals have allowed themselves to be completely blinded to the greatness and beneficence of the Church by their well-founded conviction that the clergy have frequently stood out for the most ancient and obvious abuses.

The material for judging of the nature and extent of the Church's influence in the eighteenth century is still very incomplete. The publication of the local cahiers and of the documents relating to the Church property will do much to remedy the de-

<sup>1</sup> *Les Guerres de la Révolution*, 1886 et seqq.; eleven volumes have appeared, coming down to the end of 1793.

iciency, although there must be a great deal more material both of a local and of a general nature which should be made available. Such material as exists has been utilized rather recently by Abbé Sicard in his "Bishops before the Revolution",<sup>1</sup> written in a spirit of warm admiration. The rôle of the parish priests in the elections of 1789, and the nature of their criticisms on the existing system, are treated by Chassin in his useful little book, *Les Cahiers des Curés* (1882).

With an all too inadequate background of knowledge of the conditions which determined the reforms of the Constituent Assembly, a number of accounts of the changes themselves have appeared of recent years. Some of these are scarcely more than political pamphlets called forth by the active discussion which has been carried on in regard to the "congrégations" and the state support of the churches. Others are serious and scholarly historical contributions. Theiner long ago made a collection of documents relating to religious affairs in France from 1790 to 1800.<sup>2</sup> This has been supplemented by Dr. Robinet's *Le Mouvement Religieux à Paris pendant la Révolution* (2 vols., 1896-1898). This was interrupted by the editor's death, and comes down only to September, 1793.<sup>3</sup>

Of the recent treatments of the Church, the following written from quite different standpoints may be noted<sup>4</sup>: Debidour, well known for his diplomatic history of the nineteenth century, has written a companion volume, *Histoire des Rapports de l'Église et de l'État en France de 1789 à 1870* (1898). Toward two hundred pages of this have to do with the period before the Concordat of 1801, and furnish bibliographies of the sources and older works. Professor Sloane in *The French Revolution and Religious Reform* (based on the Morse Lectures for 1900) gives the English-reading public the first scholarly account of the ecclesiastical legislation from 1789 to 1804 and its influence upon France. Aulard has followed up his earlier study on the worship of reason (1892) by *La Révolution Française et les Congrégations* (mainly documents, 1903); and by articles in the recent issues of his periodical, *La Révolution Française* (August to November, 1905), on the separation of Church

<sup>1</sup> *L'Ancien Clergé de France*, vol. I. (1893), *Les Evêques avant la Révolution*. Volumes II.-III., since published, relate to the Revolutionary period (1894, 1903).

<sup>2</sup> Augustin Theiner, *Documents Inédits relatifs aux Affaires Religieuses en France* (2 vols., 1857-1858).

<sup>3</sup> Local documents and records are constantly being published, and it is from these that the most accurate idea of the conditions and course of events must be derived. Delarue, *Le Clergé et le Culte Catholique en Bretagne pendant la Révolution*, vol. I. (1903), is an instance in point.

<sup>4</sup> Among the older accounts those still most useful are, perhaps, Sciout, *Histoire de la Constitution Civile du Clergé* (2d ed., 1887), and Gazier, *Études sur l'Histoire Religieuse de la Révolution Française* (1887).

and State. Belonging to the same school, which may rather invidiously be called that of the latter-day Jacobins, we have the elaborate and careful contributions of Mathiez, especially his monograph on theophilanthropy.<sup>1</sup> Special merits attach to the little book of M. Edme Champion, *La Séparation de l'Eglise et de l'État en 1794* (1903). The author modestly calls this "an introduction to the religious history of the Revolution", but it is a very remarkable summary of the whole movement, and the writer's spirit, knowledge, and graces of style immediately arouse the confidence and admiration of the reader.

In the matter of the history of education during the Revolution the most fundamental progress is being made in the publication by J. Guillaume of the *Procès-verbaux du Comité d'Instruction Publique* of the National Assembly (1 vol.) and of the Convention (of which the fourth volume has recently appeared). The editor has supplied valuable introductions to his material. A recent general review of the theories of education during the Revolution by Maurice Wolff will be found in *L'Œuvre Sociale de la Révolution Française*.<sup>2</sup>

Of late the economic phases of the Ancien Régime and of the Revolution have begun to receive the attention they merit. Tocqueville's few suggestions and the utterly insufficient and superficial chapters in Taine's *Ancien Régime* long represented all that even a careful student looked for to explain the antecedents of the Revolutionary reforms of 1789 and the succeeding years. Now he has at his command a number of special works which make at least a hopeful beginning toward a scientific and adequate picture of the ancient and chaotic conditions with which the National Assembly did battle.

It is to the Russians, singularly enough, that we owe some of the best recent studies upon the economic and administrative concerns of the Ancien Régime. Karéiev published in 1879 in Russian his "Peasants and the Peasant Question in France during the last quarter of the Eighteenth Century". This has been translated into French (1899) and, although unfortunately not brought up to date, is a work of very substantial value.<sup>3</sup> Afanassiev has dealt with

<sup>1</sup> *La Théophilanthropie et le Culte Décadaire, 1796-1801* (1904). The same writer has written on the origins of the Revolutionary worship and other phases of the subject.

<sup>2</sup> Paris, n. d. [1901], a collection of five essays by careful writers, with an introduction by Émile Faguet.

<sup>3</sup> See an excellent review of the volume by Henri Sée in the *Revue Historique*, November-December, 1904 (LXXXVI. 382-386). M. Sée observes that "the history of the rural classes in the eighteenth century still remains to be written". His own work, *Les Classes Rurales et le Régime Domestique en France au Moyen Âge* (1901), is really an invaluable introduction to the study of the Ancien Régime. He believes that "vers le milieu du XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle, la condition des paysans semble fixée, dans ses traits essentiels, telle qu'elle subsistera jusqu'à la fin de l'Ancien Régime," p. ix.

the important matter of the grain trade in the eighteenth century<sup>1</sup>—markets, their administration and officers, grain dealers, domestic and foreign trade, tolls, dues, etc., and the attempted reforms of Turgot and Necker. Loutchisky, above referred to,<sup>2</sup> has written on the effects of the confiscations. Kovalevsky, who devoted the first volume of his “Origins of Modern Democracy” (Moscow, 1895–1899) to France, is now beginning the publication in French of a work on France upon the eve of the Revolution from an economic and social standpoint.<sup>3</sup> Ardachev has published in Russian a study of the provincial administration which he proposes to reissue in French. As a precursor to this he has already printed (1904) a volume of documents which will form the third volume of the proposed work.<sup>4</sup>

From the pens of French scholars we have the new and “entirely recast” edition of Levasseur’s well-known “History of the Working Classes before 1789”,<sup>5</sup> in which many pages are assigned to the later seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries. On the guilds Martin-Saint-Léon has added a new monograph of which the latter part has to do with the eighteenth century.<sup>6</sup>

An especially prominent place should be assigned in this review of the economic literature to the extraordinary work of Charles Gomel. His two volumes on “The Financial Causes of the French Revolution”<sup>7</sup> which relate to Turgot, Necker, and the later controllers-general will do more to dispel the old misapprehensions in regard to the antecedents of the revolutionary movement than any other single history. Gomel conceives his subject very generously, so that in spite of its title his work is perhaps the best general account in existence of the reign of Louis XVI., and should always be included in even the most modest collection of books on the Revo-

<sup>1</sup> Georges Afanassiev, *Le Commerce des Céréales en France au Dix-huitième Siècle* (1894).

<sup>2</sup> Page 537, note 1.

<sup>3</sup> *La France Economique et Sociale à la Veille de la Révolution*, the first instalment of which appeared in the *Revue Internationale de Sociologie*, August–September, 1905.

<sup>4</sup> See an interesting article by Karéiev, “La Révolution Française dans la Science Historique Russe”, in *La Révolution Française*, XLII. 321–345. The writer maintains that the interest of Russian scholars is purely scientific and is not the result of the problems which present themselves at home.

<sup>5</sup> *Histoire des Classes Ouvrières et de l’Industrie en France avant 1789* (2d ed., 1900–1901).

<sup>6</sup> *Histoire des Corporations de Métiers depuis leurs Origines jusqu’à leur Suppression en 1791* (1897).

<sup>7</sup> *Les Causes Financières de la Révolution*, I., *Les Ministères de Turgot et de Necker* (1892); II., *Les Derniers Contrôleurs Généraux* (1893); continued under the title *Histoire Financière de l’Assemblée Constituante* (2 vols., 1896–1897) and *Histoire Financière de la Législative et de la Convention* (2 vols., 1902–1905).

lution. The work is distinguished for its perfect clarity, perspective, and fair-mindedness.

Sagnac has pointed out the need for more descriptions of local conditions, for only on them can safe general results be based. The study of the institutions of the Ancien Régime is, he urges, "extrêmement complexe et délicate".<sup>1</sup> Without a minute examination, for instance, of the actual effects of an edict, it is impossible to tell what it meant, whether it was actually promulgated in any particular district, and, if so, whether it was ever executed. As examples of the rapidly increasing number of special studies of this class may be noted the essays of Bloch on the generality of Orleans, 1760-1789 (1900),<sup>2</sup> and the monograph of P. Tézenas de Montcel, which confines itself to the proceedings from October 8, 1787, to July 21, 1790, of one of the local assemblies (that at Saint-Étienne) established by the administrative reform of June 22, 1787<sup>3</sup>. This might easily prove of more value to one striving to acquaint himself with the real character of the old administrative system and the economic problems of the time than all the more general works that have been written.

For the Revolution itself far the most noteworthy general treatment from an economic standpoint is the "Socialist History" by M. Jaurès<sup>4</sup>, whose services in organizing the national commission for the collection of the sources for economic history has already been mentioned. Printed on bad paper, in a form to be cheaply circulated among the peasants and artisans of France, the work might from its title and glaring red covers be mistaken for a gigantic pamphlet. But, on the contrary, it is certainly the best general history of the period which has appeared for many years, perhaps the best that has ever been written. The writer takes advantage of a vast amount of special investigation which was not available for earlier writers, and treats his subject in a spirit of remarkable philosophic fairness. He is clear and orderly in the arrangement of his material, and naturally places the emphasis on many points which have been sadly neglected by those interested chiefly in the political history. It is to be hoped that the exigencies of propaganda will not prevent the

<sup>1</sup> "De la Méthode dans l'Étude des Institutions de l'Ancien Régime", *Revue d'Histoire Moderne et Contemporaine*, VI. 14 et seqq.

<sup>2</sup> Camille Bloch, *Études sur l'Histoire Économique de la France* (1900).

<sup>3</sup> *L'Assemblée du Département de Saint-Étienne* (1903).

<sup>4</sup> *Histoire Socialiste, 1789-1900*, sous la direction de Jean Jaurès. Volumes I.-IV. (Paris, n. d. [1901 et seqq.]), covering the period to the Ninth Thermidor, are by Jaurès himself. Volume V., from the Ninth Thermidor to the Eighteenth Brumaire, is by Deville. Volume VI., the Consulate and Empire, is by P. Brousse and H. Turot. See a review of this work by Dr. Charles A. Beard in *Political Science Quarterly*, March, 1906.



work from being reprinted in less awkward volumes and on paper which will bring out clearly the numerous and highly interesting illustrations. It would then easily take its place in our libraries among the very best general histories of the French Revolution.<sup>1</sup>

Much more concise than the volumes of Jaurès is M. Aulard's "Political History of the Revolution" (1901), written by one who has given years of attention to the sources of the period and who naturally treats the whole republican movement with the utmost sympathy.<sup>2</sup> This compact and admirable book should be speedily translated into English.

Among the more special accounts of the work of the Revolution may be noted the later volumes of Gomel's *Histoire Financière*, covering the period of the Constituent and Legislative Assemblies (4 vols.) and ultimately to include the Convention.<sup>3</sup> The sterling merits of this work have already been emphasized. It is by no means a narrowly technical treatise, but takes into consideration all the bearings of the financial policy of the assemblies. This may be supplemented in some respects by Sagnac, *La Législation Civile de la Révolution Française, 1789-1804* (1898). This is devoted largely to the land question and to the laws affecting the family relations, marriages, inheritance, etc. Lastly, the new edition of Levasseur's "History of the Working Classes and Industry from 1789 to 1870" (1903-1904) gives much attention to the assignats and other important topics.<sup>4</sup>

Besides the general and special treatments of the Revolution from the religious, educational, and economic or social standpoint, two other classes of contributions are becoming more and more numerous as the demand for accurate and intensive historical investigation develops. One is the monograph which confines itself

<sup>1</sup> I think that some years ago M. Sorel remarked that he considered Louis Blanc's *Histoire de la Révolution Française* (Paris, 12 vols., 1847-1862) on the whole the best general account of the Revolution. That of Jaurès is far superior in all respects except in his omission of exact citations, which would have encumbered his text with foot-notes which few of those readers to whom he wished especially to appeal would have appreciated.

<sup>2</sup> See page 538, note 2. The attitude of the modern sympathizer with the Revolution is well expressed by M. Seligman as follows: "Les souffrances des victimes innocentes [of the Revolutionary tribunals] furent la rançon des progrès qui nous furent légués. Il nous appartient, à nous qui les voyons de loin, de réconcilier ces grands ancêtres dans une pieuse et filiale reconnaissance"—whatever that may mean. From an address at Liège, June, 1905, reported in *La Révolution Française*, October, 1905 (XLIX. 361).

<sup>3</sup> See page 542, note 7.

<sup>4</sup> There is a remarkable chronological table of the edicts, decrees, ordonnances, laws, etc., issued in regard to economic matters (I. lxxxii), which gives a vivid impression of the range and activity of the Revolutionary legislation compared with that of the earlier period.

to the events of a single noteworthy day or some one factor in the general situation, the other class is the local history which exhibits the origin and course of the revolutionary movement in a small district. We have books on the Fourteenth of July, the Tenth of August, the theatres, the press, the émigrés, the buildings occupied at different times by the parliamentary assemblies, the "grand' peur" in Dauphiné. Ferdinand-Dreyfus has written on public relief under the Legislative Assembly and the Convention; Seligman on the administration of justice, 1789-1792 (1901); Lenotre on the guillotine<sup>1</sup> and arrests during the Revolution.

Of the local histories recently published, that of Bruneau, *Les Débuts de la Révolution dans les Départements du Cher et de l'Indre, 1789-1791* (1902), is a study of the old province of Berry. By means of investigations such as this one can form a very exact idea of the collapse of the old government, the advent of the new provisional substitute, the progress and effects of the sale of the public lands, the issuing of the assignats. The third part of Bussière's "Historical Studies on the Revolution in Périgord" has appeared (1903). There is now a long list of similar works, some of them in several volumes. A well-chosen group of them should be in every library that aims to keep pace with the literature of the Revolution; for it is in such works, as has already been said, that one may discover the true secret of the Revolution in its influence upon the life of the common lot.<sup>2</sup>

Before bringing to a close this rather arid but perhaps useful review of the vast range and compass of activity in the field of Revolutionary history, it is natural to ask whether in view of all that has been done and all that is planned in the way of special investigation it is possible even to conceive of an adequate general review of the Revolution such as used to be undertaken with a light heart. As early as 1797 a writer on the causes and results of the Revolution declared that it was "a complete change of manners, customs, conditions, and possessions".<sup>3</sup> Such a proposition could only be proved or disproved, as we now clearly see, after a detailed examination of the manners, customs, conditions, and property-holding not only of the Revolution but of the Ancien Régime. Material for such an

<sup>1</sup> In his interesting studies, *Paris Révolutionnaire: Vieilles Maisons, Vieux Papiers* (2 vols., 1904).

<sup>2</sup> The appearance of local histories and of other monographs can be conveniently followed in *La Révolution Française*, and in the admirable *Répertoire Méthodique de l'Histoire Moderne et Contemporaine*, edited by Brière and Caron, which, beginning with an account of the output of the year 1898, has been appearing annually since 1900.

<sup>3</sup> Lezay-Marnézia, *Des Causes de la Révolution et de ses Résultats* (Paris, 1797), 6, quoted by Chassin, *Le Génie de la Révolution*, vii.

examination is only beginning to be collected, and it seems therefore impossible to determine for a long time to come what exactly were the effects of the Revolutionary changes.

But however incomplete and provisional our histories of the Revolution may be until the whole range of changes is examined and the results of the examination digested, they will hereafter be free from the influence of four fallacies which have wrought much evil in the past: first, the long-cherished belief that the Revolution began on May 5, 1789; second, that it culminated in the Reign of Terror; third, that it was confined mainly to the city of Paris; and lastly, that its history can be written from that older form of historical fiction, personal memoirs. All these convictions are being surrendered by careful scholars. The Reign of Terror no longer claims the attention of many investigators; and the provinces, as has been abundantly shown, are vying with Paris in bringing to light material relating to local history and in producing monographs and elaborate histories of all parts of the ancient kingdom. Memoirs are regarded now with rooted suspicion, and preference is always given to strictly contemporaneous reports and proceedings. The fatal date 1789 continues, however, to bar the way to a complete grasp of the unity of the revolutionary movement. Histories still close or commence with that year, although it was assuredly in 1786, when Calonne threw up his hands and summoned the Notables, that the Revolution as an unbroken political movement took its beginning.

It is high time that we had a general account of the Revolution regarded simply and solely in its most fundamental aspects as a reformation, social, political, and economic. This is what Chassin evidently had in mind when he began his never-completed "*Genius of the Revolution*". He dreamed of an "*histoire positive*", in which the personal, anecdotal, transient, and fantastic should give way to the permanent achievements of the time.<sup>1</sup> By the term "*Revolution*" Chassin understood not the upbubbling of disimprisoned anarchy, but quite prosaically the way in which the reformers transformed their ideas into acts: how they substituted for a polity based upon privilege, the régime of equality; for despotism, a free state; for divine right, the sovereignty of the people; for favor, justice. Assuredly, as Chassin ventured to think, "*cette histoire ne gagnerait-elle pas en certitude ce qu' au premier aspect elle semblerait perdre en intérêt?*" But no apologies are necessary.

This ideal, it seems to the present writer, is most nearly realized by M. Gomet.<sup>2</sup> Although he claims to deal only with the financial

<sup>1</sup> *Le Génie de la Révolution* (1864-1865), introduction. Only the first part, on the cahiers of 1789, in two volumes, ever appeared.

<sup>2</sup> See above, page 542, note 7, and page 544.

history, he really furnishes an admirable review of the whole reform movement beginning with the period of the Seven Years' War and coming down without a break through the administrations of Turgot, Necker, and the later *contrôleurs* to the National Assembly and the Convention. There is no break; the stream is perfectly continuous. Sagnac's "History of the Civil Legislation",<sup>1</sup> while dealing with only a few subjects of reform, is in the same line, as is Levasseur's "History of the Working Classes"<sup>2</sup> and the little volume of essays on the "Social Task of the Revolution", which has a very suggestive introductory essay by Émile Faguet.

In short, we need a pragmatic history of the Revolution. We long to know just what was actually accomplished. But in order to learn what was done and so appreciate properly the place of the Revolution among the great transformations of history, it will be necessary to bring the history of France from 1789 to 1800 into organic relation not only with the Ancien Régime but with the developments throughout Western Europe of the half-century immediately preceding the assembling of the Estates General. The older writers tended to give preference in their study of the Ancien Régime to the spectacular abuses and the eccentricities of speculation, which may indeed serve to explain the attitude of some of the more fantastic terrorists, but which will never account for the abrupt and permanent betterment. This must remain a mystery to those who have not traced the more or less abortive reforms and the irresistible demands for improvement which lie back of the cahiers of 1789. The Revolution will some day be recognized as fundamentally the most decisive and general readjustment to meet new and altered conditions of which we have any record. To tell the story of this rebirth, not only in France but in Western Europe, by first following out with scrupulous care the process of gestation, is the aspiration which, it is safe to prophesy, will dominate the historiography of the future.

JAMES HARVEY ROBINSON.

<sup>1</sup> See above, page 544.

<sup>2</sup> See above, page 542, note 5, and page 544.

<sup>3</sup> See above, page 541, note 2.